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ABSTRACT

For 10 months in 1929-30, subscribers to "The McCook (Nebraska) Daily Gazette" (a daily newspaper serving 33 towns in southwestern Nebraska and northwestern Kansas) received their newspapers via air delivery with "The Newsboy," a Curtis Robin cabin monoplane. In an age when over-the-road travel was difficult and air travel was just emerging, reasons for air delivery included: (1) the condition of roads (the majority of the roads in the "Gazette's" circulation area were either dirt or gravel, with widely varying standards of maintenance); (2) increasing postal rates; (3) the general interest in aviation, which had increased greatly in the previous decade; and (4) the enterprising nature of the "Gazette's" publisher, Harry D. Strunk. Although a windstorm put "The Newsboy" out of service in 1930, Strunk succeeded in establishing a broader base of loyal readers through this effort. (Seventy-two notes are attached. A map of the circulation area, an appendix listing towns served and their populations, and an appendix showing distances conclude the paper.) (SR)

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The Flying Newsboy:

A Small Daily Attempts Air Delivery

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The Flying Newsboy:

A Small Daily Attempts Air Delivery

On September 13, 1929, subscribers to The McCook (Nebraska) Daily Gazette, who lived in thirty-three towns in southwestern Nebraska and northwestern Kansas, received that day's edition of the newspaper just hours after the press run. Normally subscribers in these towns ranging sixty-seven miles west to Benkelman, Nebraska, seventy-three miles east to Orleans, Nebraska, and forty-three miles south to Atwood, Kansas, would have received their daily papers days later in the mail. But on this day and for ten more months, subscribers found their newspapers near their front doors, placed there by carriers.[1]

What made the McCook newspaper's delivery so fast on that Friday the thirteenth was the use of a Curtis Robin cabin monoplane which had been christened "The Newsboy" just minutes before it took off on its inaugural delivery flight.[2] As the plane roared into the air before a crowd estimated at 5,000 to 7,000, McCook's superintendent of schools intoned, "There goes the first newspaper delivery flight known to the American press world!"[3] (See Appendices A and B.)

Harry D. Strunk, 37, then in his nineteenth year as a newspaper publisher,[4] had arranged an inauguration for his newspaper air delivery service to match his claim of being the

first newspaper to offer such delivery on a regular basis. The city of McCook swelled with visitors coming in not only to witness the christening of "The Newsboy" and the dedication of the American Legion airport, but to view an air show, to hear speeches including one by the governor of Nebraska and to inspect several aircraft at the new airport.[5]

Strunk capitalized on an event that had already been scheduled for McCook, the "All-Nebraska Good-Will Air Tour." The week-long tour had been arranged by Omaha businessmen to promote their city. They flew to York, Grand Island, Kearney, Broken Bow and North Platte, where dignitaries feted them prior to their landing in McCook on the morning of September 13, 1929. When the twenty-seven air-tour pilots began to nose their planes in for landings at the new McCook airport, eight "ships," including two Army planes from Fort Riley, Kansas, were already on the ground.[6]

The Gazette's coverage of the event dominated the front pages of the September 12, 13, 14 and 16 editions. Reporters from The Lincoln Star, Nebraska State Journal, The Omaha World Herald and The Omaha Bee-News, traveling with the Omaha contingent, and The Denver Post provided coverage along with cameramen from two newsreel companies.[7]

Such occurrences were unparalleled in southwest Nebraska, where wheat fields stretch for miles along the plateaus and cattle graze in the more rugged terrain where the land drops off to the Republican River. The only other events that could come close were the circus and the county fair.[8] So it is understandable why

the two-day air show attracted such a large crowd. But the events do not explain why a publisher with nearly two decades of newspaper experience would gamble on airborne delivery to towns with populations ranging from a low of 187 at Beverly, Nebraska, to a high of 1,166 at Atwood, Kansas.[9] (See Appendix A.)

This paper will examine four probable reasons why Strunk decided to deliver newspapers via airplane: road conditions, postal rates, the general interest in aviation and his own enterprising nature.

Condition of the Roads

The staff correspondent for the Omaha Bee-News, who accompanied the All-Nebraska Good-Will Air Tour, observed Nebraska's highways from the air and provided this bird's eye description: "Fine highways, hard-packed gravel, sand and clay. We can see the cars speeding along, but jutting into the highway every little while is another road that would greatly benefit by state aid."[10]

Many of the towns served by the Gazette's flying "Newsboy" lay along the major road in southwest Nebraska, U.S. Highway 38.[11] It traversed the Gazette's circulation area from east to west, and parts of it were still being graveled in 1929.

If Gazette drivers had wanted to attempt delivery with the use of trucks, they would have encountered problems with the roads, some of which were graveled and some of which were going to be

graveled. Construction on Highway 38, for example, had begun in 1928. The Gazette reported that bids to complete the graveling of the western end of this highway were not let until fall 1929, and more than thirty-one miles of this road were waiting to be completed by the graveling projects.[12]

Excluding Highway 38, the majority of the roads outside of McCook were dirt. In 1925, Red Willow County, of which McCook was the county seat, had no farms located on concrete, brick, macadam or gravel roads. More than half of the 1,135 farms in the county were located on improved dirt roads. The remainder were on unimproved dirt roads. Further, of the ten counties in the Gazette's circulation area, only two had farms located on brick, concrete or macadam.[13]

The Nebraska highway system was considered to be a farm-to-market system in which county commissioners originally designated "roads [to] serve the greatest number of local people without special reference to connection with transcontinental routes."[14] In other words, roads were to be developed and improved, which would permit farmers to bring crops or cattle to market more efficiently. Before the development of state systems, farmers were expected to take upon themselves the maintenance of their "farmer's roads."[15]

Floods and mud were problems on both dirt and gravel roads. A flood in July 1928 pushed the Republican River, which paralleled two highways in Southwest Nebraska, out of its banks.[16] (See map.) Traffic south of McCook was halted and was "slightly delayed" on

U.S. Highway 38. The cost of repairing No. 38 was estimated at "quite a sum" because the shoulders of the road had to be rebuilt and the silt on the grading had to be removed.[17]

Nebraska's highway system was being built on a pay-as-you-go basis. In 1917 the legislature accepted federal aid provided by the Federal Highway Act of 1916, and county commissioners designated the roads to be improved by the funds. By 1927, there were 6,000 miles of roads in the state highway system. A two-cent tax on gasoline was approved in 1925, and the estimated $3 million in revenue from the tax was to be used for road construction and maintenance.[18]

Between 1917 and 1926, the state spent $14.7 million of its revenues and $12.6 million in federal funds on roads. Maintenance of the roads did not become a responsibility of the state until 1926; and by 1928, the Nebraska Good Roads Association, an organization which promoted road building similar to the Chamber of Commerce promoted business, wanted to increase the funding for highway construction as it worried about the cost of road maintenance.[19] In April 1928 the association noted:

> The mileage of graveled highways is steadily increasing and with it is increasing the cost of maintenance. The experience the State has had is proof that before the present system of State highways is completely surfaced, the cost of maintenance alone will more than equal the entire amount of funds which are now available for both construction and maintenance.[20]

Noting that in 1927 the cost of maintenance had increased by 12 percent over the preceding year, the association worried that there

would be no state funds available for 1929 to match about $1 million in federal road-building funds because it would have been used up in paying for maintenance. The two-cent gasoline tax continued to yield more revenue each year, but the association argued that the increase was not keeping pace with the maintenance costs generated by more traffic.[21]

Governor Arthur Weaver did succeed in doubling the gasoline tax in 1929 after a battle with the legislature.[22] When he spoke to the crowd gathered at McCook for the dedication, inauguration and air show on September. 13, 1929, his speech was titled "The Evolution of Transportation."[23] Although he spoke on the future of aviation, he had made the last leg of his journey to the McCook airport in a 1905 International autobuggy, an irony the Gazette did not neglect to report.[24]

Nebraska also experienced road development as a result of rural mail delivery. In 1920 there were 1,107 mail routes in Nebraska totaling 30,674 miles. From 1920-1925 the number of routes increased on the average of nine per year, and the mileage of all the routes increased an average of 616 miles per year. Nebraska closed the decade with the same number of rural mail routes, 1,107, as it had in 1920 but with 36,215 miles. The number of routes decreased from 1925-1930 because some were consolidated and others extended.[25]

Strunk, having moved to McCook in 1909, was no doubt well aware of the condition of the roads. In 1928 one of the objectives in his service pledge, a series of goals which the Gazette

supported, was better artery highways; and in 1929 he called for general improvement of farm-to-market roads in southwest Nebraska and the completion of highway surfacing projects and proper road maintenance. He also wanted to establish bus lines.[26]

Because the majority of the roads in the Gazette's circulation area outside of McCook were either dirt or gravel and in some cases the maintenance of the roads varied because of the governmental entity caring for them, Strunk probably thought over-the-road delivery of newspapers to distant towns was infeasible. After all, the Public Roads Administration had found that eighty percent of the truck trips in rural areas were less than twenty miles in length with the average trip being 8.1 miles.[27] Traveling the seventy-three miles to Orleans, for example, in a truck over gravel or dirt roads, even at the state-mandated speed limit of thirty-five mph, did not allow enough time to deliver newspapers at thirty-three towns, let alone to complete a full circle of the entire circulation area of about 400 miles.

So Strunk decided to try newspaper delivery by air instead. A test flight of the delivery service was conducted September 12, 1929, in two hops. On the first hop, the pilot flew "The Newsboy" as far east as Orleans and back in one hour and forty-five minutes, and in the second he flew as far west as Benkelman and Imperial and back to McCook in two hours and thirteen minutes.[28]

One seat had been removed from the plane, and a chute had been cut into the floor to allow the newspapers to be dropped from the air. Steve Tuttle was the first pilot, and his brother, George,

accompanied him and made the drops.[29] The newspapers had been placed in canvas bags, which were loaded into all of the available space in the plane. They were dropped from the air at 500 feet.[30]

The coverage of the test flight concluded by saying:

> The airplane will be used to cover such points as are now poorest served by other means of transportation. If adequate service can be maintained otherwise over any part of the territory later, that method will then be use (sic) and the airplane route extended to other points not now being served.[31]

Postal Rates

Other newspapers were adopting different means of delivery as well. Historian Frank Luther Mott noted that the increase in newspapers' postal rates brought on by the passage of the War Revenue Act of 1917 forced newspapers to look for alternative delivery systems. Second-class rates were to increase annually beginning in 1918 until the rate in 1921 reached two cents a pound for the first zone and ten cents for the eighth zone. The newspaper industry lobbied for a rate reduction for ten years. Meanwhile it "discarded the mails for other methods of distribution--chiefly a truck-carrier combination."[32]

A representative of the American Newspaper Publishers Association pointed out in a brief presented to Congress in 1924 that second-class postage (for newspapers) was the only class of mail to have had its rate increased since 1912. The 1917 increase cost daily newspapers 20 to 40 percent of their mail circulation when subscription rates were raised in order to pass the higher

cost on to subscribers. Overall, the rate increase was responsible for removing nearly 600 million pieces of second-class mail from the mails, or the equivalent of one-eighth of the volume the Post Office was carrying in 1912.[33] The Post Office countered by explaining that if the department did as the publishers' association requested, it would deliver the second-class mail at an annual loss of more than $5.5 million.[34]

In 1928, the publishers association sought to return the rates to the 1920 level, and a rate reduction did occur that year when the first-and second-zone rates for all contents was lowered from two cents to one-and-a-half cents. Jerome D. Barnum of the Syracuse (New York) Post-Standard, the chairman of the ANPA postal committee, predicted that the $4 million of annual business that had been diverted to cheaper delivery means would return to the Post Office if a bundle rate were instituted.[35] But as previously noted, this did not happen.

Actions taken by Strunk make it difficult to analyze the impact of the postal rate increase on the Gazette. Until 1924 the newspaper was a semi-weekly. Then Strunk advanced it to daily status and changed the name of the paper from The Red Willow County Gazette to The McCook Daily Gazette.[36]

In 1928, the year before he initiated air delivery, the annual subscription rate was $5.20; but in 1929 the rate dropped to $4 only to increase in 1930 to $7.[37] These changes may have had more to do with the newspaper's becoming a daily and with the promotion and cost of the air-delivery service than with the postal rate

increase.

Yet, the discussion in the newspaper industry concerning the second-class postal rate increase and the subsequent discussion on delivering newspapers by some other means than the mails may have inspired Strunk to consider a different means of delivery.

Interest in Aviation

Commenting on aviation for The New York Times in 1930, Charles Lindbergh compared aviation development during the previous decade to the development of the railroad industry in the ten years following the Civil War. "Today there are 25,000 miles of established airways over which 83,000 miles a day are being flown," he wrote, noting that in 1920 there had been no airways and the miles flown in a day's time were measured in the hundreds. He credited the passage of the Air Mail Act of 1925 and the Air Commerce Act of 1926 as "paramount" influences in the development of the aviation industry. The evolution of air mail made commercial aviation possible and the Air Commerce Act created the air routes equipped with navigational aids (airways) necessary to insure the safety of the system. Three times more passengers traveled by air in 1929 than in 1928, Lindbergh noted, adding that passengers could purchase air transportation at less than the cost of rail and Pullman fare combined.[38]

Thus, the airline industry had passed its toddling stage and entered its growth years. The airplane manufacturing industry began in 1923, and in five years it had made a higher rate of

profit--thirty-four percent--than any industry.[39] Output increased sharply as did the number of pilots. More than 4,000 aircraft were manufactured in the United States in 1929, as opposed to slightly more than 1,000 in 1927.[40] By January 1, 1930, more than 10,000 men had become licensed pilots, and more than 4,000 of those received their licenses in 1929.[41]

Lindbergh himself had changed public reaction to aviation. According to William M. Leary, Air Mail historian, the fledgling industry soared after Lindbergh made his historic solo trans-Atlantic flight in May 1927.

> (His) heroic journey provided a significant stimulus for aviation: investors poured millions of dollars into the developing industry, thousands of young men learned to fly, municipalities across the country built airports, and an 'air-minded' public patronized the air mail.[42]

Nebraska had already figured in aviation history by 1929. Lindbergh, the nation's most famous aviator, took his first flying lessons at Lincoln from the Nebraska Aircraft Corporation in 1922.[43] But more importantly, the Post Office, which had instituted air mail service in 1918, had extended the New York City-to-Omaha route in 1920 to San Francisco, California, by way of North Platte, Nebraska. With this extension from Omaha to San Francisco, the service was placed on a daily-except-Sundays schedule.[44]

In February 1923, pilots at North Platte, sixty-eight miles north of McCook, had conducted experimental night flying for the Post Office. A course between the North Platte airfield and an emergency landing field twenty-five miles away was set up to test

rotating beacons, routing markers, terminal and emergency field lighting systems and aircraft equipment. Though several useful improvements to equipment were made in the tests, the biggest accomplishment was getting the air mail pilots to fly at night. By fall 1923, the world's first night airway--an 885-mile route extending from Chicago (over Nebraska) to Cheyenne--was ready.[45]

The All-Nebraska Good-Will Air Tour was evidence that commercial aviation had a start in Nebraska. Twenty-five planes departed from Omaha to land at new or almost new airports in seven Nebraska cities and towns. Two Omaha newspapers sent reporters on the tour, and both featured their stories prominently on their front pages. The Bee-News reporter wrote a first-person account describing how the pilot of his plane buzzed farmyards and school yards as a way of greeting interested spectators and how hordes of spectators turned out to greet the "air tourists" at each stop.[46] By the time the tour had returned to Omaha after its week long journey hundreds of column inches in five area newspapers and the Gazette had described the receptions, air stunts, safety and accidents associated with it.[47]

Dignitaries from Denver, including one representing the governor of Colorado, flew to McCook for the dedication and christening ceremonies on September 13, 1929. A Denver Post reporter and a photographer accompanied the entourage and provided Denver readers with two days of coverage. On Saturday, September 14, 1929, The Post ran more than a column of coverage and a photo of the crowd milling around one of the planes on view and another

of the governor of Nebraska on page three. On the next day it ran a photo and story on Page One of the entourage's plane which made a crash landing at the close of the festivities. While the plane suffered considerable damage, no one was hurt.[48]

The Gazette's "mammoth air show," airport dedication and airplane christening garnered front-page and inside coverage of nearly 235 column inches. This was not surprising because interest in aviation and airplanes had been evident in McCook much earlier. A group of exhibition flyers had trucked in an unassembled biplane in July 1913, and after assembly it became the first airplane to take off and crash there. About ten years later, the Morton Brothers airplane factory had operated in McCook.[49]

McCook also claimed two World War I fighter pilots. One became the pilot for the country's first medical doctor to use the airplane to make housecalls. Wade Stevens piloted Dr. Frank A. Brewster's plane for the doctor from May 1919 until he entered law school in the fall of that year.[50]

Furthermore, aviation coverage was not unusual in the pages of the Gazette. The newspaper leased the United Press wire and subscribed to the Newspaper Enterprise Association features and pictures service, both of which carried aviation news. For example a four-column photo filled a portion of page two on August 30, 1923, featuring the air mail pilots who were nicknamed the "Night Riders of the Year." This was accompanied by a cutline that described the experiments for night flying at North Platte. Another photo on September 3, 1923, showed the "newest and greatest bomber"

surrounded by a "crowd of civilian aviation enthusiasts who outnumbered the Army folks."[51]

The Gazette's coverage of Lindbergh's solo trans-Atlantic flight had begun May 20, 1927 and continued through June. "Lindbergh off on Paris Flight," covered seven columns on Page One of the May 20 edition. This was followed by a two-liner: "'Lone Wolf' flyer is winging over ocean," succeeded by "Is Only One of Three Pilots to Take Off in Attempt to Cross Atlantic," and "OCEANIC STORMS CLEAR." A photo of Lindbergh with his mother completed the coverage.[52]

Two local stories competed with the Lindbergh story. One was a story on a murder in Benkelman, a town sixty-three miles west of McCook. The murder story was given the seven-column headline on May 23, while the Lindbergh story for that day filled two columns and was accompanied by a four-column photo of him saying goodbye to friends at Roosevelt Field, Long Island.[53] Then on May 25, the Lindbergh story was bumped in favor of coverage about the controversy over where to build the new Red Willow County Courthouse.[54]

The Gazette reported in March 1928 that the Chamber of Commerce was considering a plan for an airport northwest of the city. In January 1929 the city government purchased the land, but it could not afford to build a $1,000 hangar. The American Legion Post took on the project in the summer, financed in part by a $750 grant from the Chamber of Commerce. The remainder of the $1,000 cost of the hangar was to come from the proceeds of concessions

sold at the September 13, 1929, air show.[55]

Promotion of the Gazette air delivery service began in August 1929. The major claim of this promotion, that the Gazette was the first newspaper in the world to regularly deliver newspapers by airplane, appeared in a story on August 19. A week prior to that, the newspaper had begun to push its own pilots' school. The pilot who had been hired to fly the plane would teach lessons in the mornings and fly the delivery flights in the afternoons. Strunk promised a ride in "The Newsboy" to every person who subscribed to the paper for two years.[56]

The date of the inauguration, dedication and the two-day air show extravaganza was announced on August 30, and on September 12, the Gazette's new nameplate was used for the first time. This flag featured aviator's wings behind the name of the newspaper and small airplanes in the "ears." A box over the left airplane presented Strunk's motto for the newspaper: "Service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy in this world. We want to pay our rent in advance." The box over the right airplane featured the words, "Home Edition."[57] The September 12 front page not only listed the next day's events, but said the Chamber of Commerce advised all businesses in McCook to remain open after the first day's events in order to accommodate the throng of visitors.[58]

The number of shoppers brought to McCook by the air show gratified merchants. According to the Gazette, the manager of the Montgomery Ward store reported having 18,000-20,000 people in the store on the second day of the air show.[59]

THE McCOOK DAILY GAZETTE

HOME EDITION

Volume VI—Number [illegible] United Press Leased Wire McCOOK, NEBRASKA, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1929 N. E. A. Features and Pictures Price Five Cents

The namoplate or flag of the Gazette as it appeared on the first day of its use, Sept. 12, 1929.

Newsboy

Pilot Bill Kimsey (left), Thelma Sealock of Lincoln and Harry D. Strunk, GAZETTE founder, pose in front of the "Newsboy." The airplane was the first to deliver newspapers regularly.

A photo of "The Newsboy" which was used in a later publication. At right is Harry D. Strunk.

The Enterprising Publisher

Strunk took time out from the air show to write an editorial on Saturday, September 14. He was elated about the statewide and nationwide publicity generated for McCook by the events of the day before, but lamented that the name of the Gazette had been omitted from most of the coverage. However, he conceded that it did not matter. "Fortunately we have our own medium of informing the people of Soutwest Nebraska and Northwest Kansas," he wrote. The inauguration of the air delivery service backed this statement.[80]

Strunk's willingness to chance the resources of his newspaper to provide readers outside of his immediate trade area with the Gazette indicated his initiative. "He was a gutsy guy, aggressive and forward thinking," his son, Allen, recalled in 1988.[81]

A Nebraska native, Strunk quit school at fourteen because of financial circumstances. He became a printer's devil on his hometown newspaper, The Pawnee City Republican, and earned $2 a week. He moved on to Fairbury, Nebraska, and Pohattan, Kansas, before landing a job at The Norton (Kansas) Daily Telegram, where he eventually took responsibility for ten employees who set type by hand. Strunk was 17 years old.[82]

He delayed a trip to the west coast after spotting an advertisement seeking a printer that had been placed by The McCook Tribune. He moved the fifty-five miles to McCook and worked at the Tribune for nine months before he and a fellow printer opened a job-printing shop. Strunk's son recalled that the

two of them did not have enough money to pay for ink when they started the venture.[83]

In 1911, six months after the job shop had opened, the two printers mortgaged their equipment and used all the money they had saved to publish their own newspaper, the semi-weekly Red Willow County Gazette. From the second day of publication, Strunk had to shoulder the publisher's responsibilities alone because his partner committed suicide.[84]

Strunk had proven his dauntless nature, but still more examples of his intrepid spirit were to manifest themselves. Strunk gave McCook, population 6,688, the distinction of being the smallest city in the state to have a daily newspaper after converting the semi-weekly newspaper to daily status on July 1, 1924. It was a bold move considering the small number of advertisers available to support the newspaper, Strunk's son commented latter. Nevertheless, two years later Strunk moved his newspaper to a new building on Main Street, relocating its linotype machine and presses. The Gazette had been the first newspaper between Hastings, Nebraska, and Denver--a distance of 400 miles--to use a linotype, acquiring it in 1914.[85]

The publisher's next innovation was the air-delivery service, which lasted ten months through July 1930, until the airplane was damaged in a windstorm.[86] The idea of air delivery of newspapers was not exclusively Strunk's. The New York Times flew newspapers to Havana for delegates of the Pan American Conference in January 1928 and to President Hoover and members of the cabinet in

Washington in May 1928. The publisher of The Los Angeles Times told the American Newspaper Publishers Association in April 1928 that it was using air delivery to bring copies of the paper to Angelinos in San Francisco. In 1929, three New York newspapers, The New York Times, The World, and The Evening Journal, as well as The Chicago Daily News, and The Boston Transcript, used air-delivery service for their newspapers.[67]

Strunk's unique claim in this enterprise was that his was the first newspaper in the world to offer the service on a regular basis. This idea was given credence two months later when a League of Nations conference in November 1929 endorsed a plan for the governments of Europe to encourage international delivery of newspapers by airplane.[68]

Even after "The Newsboy" was damaged in the windstorm, the distant towns on the bus line still received the newspaper for daily home delivery. Bundles of newspapers were taken to the bus stop at the Keystone Hotel, about a block from the Gazette office, and carriers picked their papers up at the bus stops in their towns.[69]

As for the air-delivery service, it was expensive, and the cost was not offset by the pilots' lessons as Strunk may have hoped.[70] However, circulation did soar. In 1928 the Gazette's circulation was 2,800, and it increased by 360 by 1929; but between 1929 and 1930, it increased by 1,340 to 4,500. A year after air delivery was discontinued, the circulation dropped to 4,050 in 1931, which was still an increase of 45 percent over the

circulation of 1928.[71]

Conclusion

The "Flying Newsboy" was a regular newspaper delivery method in 1929-1930. Though air delivery had been tried on smaller scales by other newspapers, this method of delivery previously was a novelty. However, Harry D. Strunk seriously applied the method to his newspaper for the first time in 1929 and realized a significant gain in circulation. Although a windstorm put "The Newsboy" out of service in 1930 and the Depression probably would have eventually stopped the daily flights, Strunk established a broader base of loyal readers through this effort. From the 1930s to the present the Gazette consistently maintained high circulations.[72]

This study describes the efforts of a small daily newspaper to become a mass medium in an age when over-the-road travel was difficult and air travel was just emerging as an alternative. Further study is warranted to document the use of air delivery of newspapers by other companies between the period beginning with Lindbergh's solo trans-Atlantic flight and the beginning of the Depression.

Notes

1. See "Stage Set for Mammoth Air Show," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 12, 1929; "Newsboy Carries Papers for Test," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 13, 1929; and letter from Allen D. Strunk, Dec. 4, 1987. Strunk is the son of Harry D. Strunk, Gazette founder, and succeeded him as publisher. McCook, Nebraska, is the county seat of Red Willow County in southwest Nebraska. It is approximately 14 miles north of the Kansas-Nebraska state line and 228 miles southwest of the capitol city, Lincoln, and about 270 miles northeast of Denver, Colorado.

2. A photo of the plane filled three columns in the top half of Page 1 on Sept. 13, 1929. According to Allen D. Strunk, it was the elder Strunk's idea to name the airplane "The Newsboy." The name was painted on the sides of the plane. Letter from Allen D. Strunk, Dec. 4, 1987.

3. "Thousands Witness Air Show Event," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 14, 1929.

4. Allen D. Strunk, "Gazette Became Number One," Centennial History of McCook, Nebraska (McCook, Nebraska: The McCook Daily Gazette, 1982), Commercial Section.

5. See "Thousands Witness Air Show Event," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 14, 1929; Allen D. Strunk, "Gazette Became Number One;" and Fifteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 680. The 1930 census listed McCook's population as 6,688.

6. See "Air Tour Blazes New State Trails," Omaha Bee-News,

Sept.13, 1929. Also see "Thousands Witness Air Show Event," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 14, 1929.

7. See The Denver Post, Sept. 14, 1929, p. 3, and Sept. 15, 1929, p. 1; Omaha World Herald, Sept. 14, 1929, p. 1 and p. 4; Omaha Bee-News, Sept. 13, pp. 1-2; The Lincoln Star, Sept. 15, 1929, p 2. and p. 6; and The Nebraska State Journal, Sept.13, 1929, p. 1. Also see "Largest Throng Ever In City Is Prediction," McCook Daily Gazette,, Sept. 12, 1929.

8. Telephone interview with Leopold "Bus" Bahl, Jan. 16, 1988. Bahl, who worked for three Strunk generations at the Gazette, retired after 63 years of service to the newspaper. He began in 1922 as a carrier at the age of 11. He recalled that he rode in "The Newsboy" as the pilot's assistant when it was so windy no one else wanted to go. McCook businessmen vied for the opportunity to go as the assistant; however, on windy days they lost interest.

9. Fifteenth Census of the United States, pp. 416 and 675. The towns which were to receive air-delivered newspapers were listed on page 2 of the September 13, 1929, Gazette (See Appendix A).

10. "Air-Minded Throngs Swamp Fliers at Grand Island and Kearney, Circle Above School During Recess Period,"Omaha Bee-News, Sept. 13, 1929.

11. It is now U.S. Highway 6 and 34. See Rand McNally 1987 Road Atlas (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1987), p. 34, and the "Official Map," Nebraska State Highway System, Condition July 1, 1930, available at the Department of Roads, Lincoln, Nebraska, for

comparison purposes.

12. "Contracts Let For Highway Gravel to Close D.L.D. Gaps," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 12, 1929. According to Dick Genrich, highway inventory mapping supervisor at the Nebraska Department of Roads, the 1934 map shows that U.S. Highway 38 was paved from the western border of Red Willow County to Cambridge. Telephone interview, Jan. 29, 1988.

13. See The United States Census of Agriculture of 1925 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 1145. There were 707 farms on improved dirt roads and 404 farms on unimproved dirt in Red Willow County. The ten counties in the circulation area were Chase, Dundy, Hitchcock, Hayes, Red Willow, Furnas, and Harlan in Nebraska, and Cheyenne, Decatur and Rawlins in Kansas. Chase County had one farm on a macadam road and Dundy County had one farm on a brick or concrete road.

14. "Roads and Road Building in Nebraska," Nebraska Highways, October 1927, p. 6.

15. Wayne E. Fuller, RFD: The Changing Face of Rural America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), pp. 178-179.

16. The Republican River parallels State Highway 3 (now U.S. 34) from Benkelman to Culbertson, U.S. Highway 38 (now U.S. 6 and 34) from near Culbertson to Arapahoe, and State Highway 3 (now State Highway 136) from Arapahoe to Orleans (See map).

17. "State Highway Withstands Floods," Nebraska Highways, August, 1928, p. 3.

18. "Roads and Road Building in Nebraska," Nebraska

Highways, October 1927, pp. 5-7.

19. Ibid.

20. "Maintenance Cost Increases," Nebraska Highways, April 1928, p. 5.

21. Ibid.

22. Roland M. Jones, "Weaver Pleases Nebraska People," The New York Times, May 12, 1929.

23. "Weaver Praises State Air Tour," The Lincoln Star, Sept. 15, 1929.

24. "Air Show Notes," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 15, 1929.

25. See Annual Reports of the Postmaster General, 1920-1929.

26. See editorial pages of The McCook Daily Gazette, 1928-1929.

27. See charts, Annual Reports (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Public Roads Administration, 1950) p. 37.

28. "Newsboy Carries Papers For Test," The McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 13, 1929.

29. Ibid., p. 2.

30. Telephone interview with Leopold Bahl, Jan. 16, 1988.

31. "Newsboy Carries Papers For Test," The McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 13, 1929.

32. Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism (New York: The MacMillin Co., 1947), p. 633. He calls the Gazette's effort at air delivery "pioneering."

33. "Is An Increase of Second Class Rates Justified?" Congressional Digest, February 1925, p. 168.

34. Ibid. p. 179.

35. "ANPA Adopted Resolution Asking Congress To Reduce Postal Rates on Newspapers Distributed Through the Mails." The New York Times, April 26, 1928.

36. Allen D. Strunk, "Gazette Became Number One."

37. See the N.W. Ayer Publication Directory (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer Co.), for 1928, p. 653; 1929, p. 635; 1930, p. 589; and 1931, p. 566.

38. Charles Lindbergh, "Future of Air Transport by Three Leaders," The New York Times, May 4, 1930.

39. Silas Bent, "Collapsing Time and Space," World's Work, November 1930, p. 67.

40. Ibid.

41. Myron M. Stearns, "The Men Who Fly the Planes," World's Work, July 1930, p. 62.

42. William M. Leary, Aerial Pioneers (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 1985), p. 237. Leary provides a chronology of the United States Air Mail Service.

43. Perry D. Luckett, Charles A. Lindbergh, A Bio-Bibliography (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 6-7.

44. Postmaster General, Annual Report of the Postmaster General (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), p. 45.

45. Leary, Aerial Pioneers, p. 178.

46. Randall Blake, "Air Tourists Enjoy Scenery, 'Fresh Ozone'"; Omaha Bee-News, Sept. 13, 1929.

47. See The Denver Post, Sept. 14, 1929, p. 3, and Sept. 15, 1929, p. 1; Omaha World Herald, Sept. 14, 1929, pp. 1, 4; Omaha Bee-News, Sept. 13, pp. 1-2; The Lincoln Star, Sept. 15, 1929, pp 2, 6; and The Nebraska State Journal, Sept. 13, 1929, p. 1. Also see The McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 12, 1929, p. 1; Sept. 13, 1929, pp. 1-2; Sept. 14, 1929, pp. 1-2; and Sept. 16, 1929, p. 1.

48. See A.G. Birch, "73 Planes Thrill Crowd at M'Cook Airport Dedication," The Denver Post, Sept. 14, 1929; and "Twelve Unhurt in Smash Up of Denver Plane," The Denver Post, Sept. 15, 1929.

49. See Ted Truby, "Aviation in McCook," Centennial History of McCook, Nebraska (McCook, Nebraska: The McCook Daily Gazette, 1982), Commercial Section. Also telephone interview with Ray Search, amateur historian for McCook, Nebraska, Jan. 16, 1988. As a young man, Search would hang around the Morton Airplane Factory in McCook and help to sew the covering on airplane wings. He took up flying as a hobby but was grounded permanently by his fiancee.

50. Ted Truby, "Aviation in McCook," Centennial History of McCook, Nebraska.

51. See "Night Riders of the Year 1923," McCook Daily Gazette, Aug. 30, 1923; and "Crowd Admires Newest and Greatest Bomber," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 23, 1923.

52. "Lindbergh Off On Paris Flight," McCook Daily Gazette, May 20, 1927.

53. See stories on Page One, McCook Daily Gazette, May 23, 1927.

54. See stories on Page One, McCook Daily Gazette, May 25, 1927.

55. See "Plan for Airport Offered Chamber," McCook Daily Gazette, March 12, 1928; and "M'Cook Is Given Hangar for Port," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 12, 1929.

56. See "Steve Tuttle Is to Pilot Plane on Newspaper Route," McCook Daily Gazette, Aug. 19, 1929; and "Air Show Notes," Sept. 13, 1929, McCook Daily Gazette. Also telephone interview with Allen D. Strunk, Feb. 6, 1988.

57. "Inauguration of Gazette Airplane Delivery Service and Dedication of New American Legion Airport," McCook Daily Gazette, Aug. 30, 1929; and newspaper flag, McCook Daily Gazette. Sept. 12, 1929. Versions of this flag were used until 1987.

58. "Notice To All McCook Business Houses," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 12, 1929.

59. "None Injured in Crash of Airplanes At Show," McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 16, 1929.

60. "McCook Draws Front Page Position," Editorial. McCook Daily Gazette, Sept. 14, 1929.

61. Telephone interview with Allen D. Strunk, Feb. 6, 1988.

62. Allen D. Strunk, "Gazette Became Number One."

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. "Six Planes Wrecked in Storm Here," McCook Daily Gazette, July 21, 1930. The original "Newsboy" is now part of the

collection of the Seattle Air Museum.

67. See "Havana Gets Times Day Early By Air," The New York Times, Jan. 17, 1928; and "Late Times Edition to Capital by Air," The New York Times, May 7, 1928; "Delivering the News by Plane," The New York Times, May 6, 1928; and Mott, American Journalism, p. 717.

68. "Air Delivery of Newspapers Urged Governments of Europe; League Would Erase Frontiers for Carriers," The New York Times, Nov. 30, 1929.

69. Telephone interview with Allen D. Strunk, Feb. 6, 1988.

70. Letter from Allen D. Strunk, Dec. 4, 1987.

71. See the N.W. Ayer Publication Directory for 1928, p. 653; 1929, p. 635; 1930, p. 589; and 1931, p. 566.

72. Ben Frank piloted the second "Newsboy" beginning Jan. 20, 1950, according to Ted Truby, "Aviation in McCook." This service was discontinued four years later when the contract flight service went from seven to nine cents per mile. Pickup trucks were purchased then to transport the bundles of papers to the surrounding towns, and they were nicknamed "Newsboys." Letter from Allen D. Strunk, Dec. 4, 1987. The Gazette has held the distinction for several years of having the largest circulation of all U.S. daily newspapers printed in counties up to 17,250 population. See Allen D. Strunk, "Gazette Become Number One."

OFFICIAL MAP
NEBRASKA
TE HIGHWAY SYSTEM
RED BY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
BUREAU OF ROADS AND BRIDGES
CONDITION JULY 1, 1930
LEGEND
EARTH GRADE
EARTH GRADE
ERTISED OR UNDER CONTRACT JULY 1, 1930
ERTISED OR UNDER CONTRACT JULY 1, 1930
ETWEEN POINTS
R. E. COCHRAN, STATE ENGINEER
HOOKER
ARTHUR
MC PHERSON
LOGAN
CUSTER
CHEYENNE
DEUEL
KEITH
PERKINS
LINCOLN
DAWSON
CHASE
HAYES
FRONTIER
GOSPER
DUNDY
HITCHCOCK
RED WILLOW
FURNAS
GARDEN
MORRILL
BANNER
KIMBALL
BRIDGEPORT
OSHKOSH
SIDNEY
OGALLALA
NORTH PLATTE
GRANT
IMPERIAL
HAYES CENTER
STOCKVILLE
BENKELMAN
LEXINGTON
TO STERLING
TO JULESBURG
TO ST. FRANCIS
TO ATWOOD
TO OBERLIN
TO WRAY

31

McCook

32

Appendix A

Populations of towns in the first flight east and south:

Indianola	315
Bartley	465
Cambridge	1,203
Holbrook	488
Arapahoe	1,017
Edison	329
Oxford	1,155
Orleans	985
Stamford	297
Hollinger	*
Beaver City	1,024
Hendley	211
Wilsonville	489
Shippee	*
Lebanon	262
Danbury	321
Marion	*

Populations of towns in the second flight to the west and south:

Culbertson	820
Beverly	184**
Palisade	731
Hamlet	199
Wauneta	793
Imperial	946
Benkelman	1,154
Max	519***
Stratton	563
Trenton	865
Atwood, Kan.	1,166
Ludell, Kan.	381***
Herndon, Kan.	430
Traer, Kan.	*
Oberlin, Kan.	1,629
Cedar Bluff, Kan.	*

* No population given
** Precinct population
*** Township population
Source: Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930 Volume.

Appendix B

Mileages from McCook, Nebraska

Traveling East

Indianola	12
Bartley	19
Cambridge	28
Holbrook	37
Arapahoe	43
Edison	51
Oxford	60
Orleans	73
Stamford	77
Hollinger	84
Beaver City	92
Hendley	99
Wilsonville	108
Shippee	115
Lebanon	121
Danbury	128*
Marion	133*

Traveling West

Culbertson	13
Beverly	22
Palisade	31
Hamlet	39
Wauneta	47
Imperial	66
Benkelman	67
Max	59
Stratton	49
Trenton	37
Atwood, Kan.	43**
Ludell, Kan.	*
Herndon, Kan.	*
Traer, Kan.	*
Oberlin, Kan.	26**
Cedar Bluff, Kan.	18**

*Mileage not available
**Estimated Mileage based on 1987 map
Source: Official Map, Nebraska State Highway System, Condition July 1, 1930, Rand McNally 1987 Road Atlas.